

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR PERSON-CENTERED PRACTICES SOUTHEASTERN VIRGINIA TRAINING CENTER

July, 2008

Introduction

Southeastern Virginia Training Center began operation in 1975 as one component in the system transformation of a previous generation. For more than 30 years the Center has been providing habilitation and support services for the citizens of HPR V who have significant intellectual disabilities. Over the decades, we have witnessed a transition from a focus on remediation of skill deficits and matching people to programs to an emphasis on strengths and the adaptation of environments to support the interests and abilities of individuals. The impetus for this change has largely come from the individuals for whom we have been providing services. They have made it clear that they do not consider themselves to be “broken” or in need of being “fixed”. Rather, they seek to live their lives in ways that are consistent with their own interests, preferences, and aspirations.

System transformation poses significant opportunities and challenges for SEVTC. We have an opportunity to adapt and grow as our field is transformed and as our ‘customers’ demand. Our challenge is to make necessary changes in organizational culture with limited resources and within the existing framework of professional guidelines, regulatory standards, and law. We take comfort in the widespread recognition that this is a journey, not a day trip. We also acknowledge that true progress can come only through an understanding of our past and present and an unremitting commitment to the growth that will move the Center successfully into the future. We have begun the journey.

Person-centered practice has become a cornerstone in the field of intellectual disabilities in the twenty-first century. As defined in the Inspector General’s report, it is “a way of discovering and crafting the kind of life a person desires, developing a plan for how it can be achieved, assuring access to needed supports and services through a shared commitment, and on-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the plan that includes celebrations of achievement.” Several years ago the Center’s mission statement was modified to highlight dignity and self-determination, support and partnerships, preferences and choice--the hallmarks of a person-centered approach.

OUR MISSION

We are a partner in the community-based system of services and supports for persons with intellectual and related developmental disabilities and their families who live in Health Planning Region 5. We provide education, training, health and medical services; promote dignity, self-determination, and empowerment; and, provide supports that are important to and for the Virginia citizens that we serve.

OUR VALUES

- *Focusing on the preferences, choices, needs, rights, and life decisions of individuals we support;*
- *Partnering with individuals living at SEVTC, their family members, employees, and community providers in the planning, development and provision of services and supports;*
- *Providing an environment that is safe and free from harm for those living and working at SEVTC;*
- *Recognizing and supporting employees as our most important asset;*
- *Using public resources effectively.*

We have been working hard to put the Center's mission and values into practice. Through our organizational assessment, workforce development projects, peer to peer discussions, family interactions, collaborative participation with community and state partners, that we have learned a great deal about ourselves, our system, our role in the region, our beliefs, and the direction that we need to be headed. We have seen proof that we can provide opportunities for the individuals we support to live better lives. These indications of positive impact in individual lives and the renewed enthusiasm of staff members keep us motivated.

We also recognize that a person-centered approach requires substantive culture change within and beyond SEVTC. There are significant obstacles to overcome. Current systems emphasize care, safety, security, and risk reduction. Policies and practices present barriers. We face the difficult task of realigning current thinking, the positive behavioral and learning technologies in our field, and both internal and external systems to allow, support, and even drive person-centered practices—always to be thinking, 'not no, but how'.

Upon receipt in late April, the OIG's Review of the Self Determination and Person-centered Experience of Individuals Served at Training Centers Operated by DMHMRSAS was distributed to SEVTC's Executive Team and to the SEVTC Person-centered Practice Leadership Team. Team members were asked to give thoughtful consideration to the OIG findings, to discuss findings with staff and peers, and to prepare recommendations for the Center comprehensive plan. These teams and a range of other Center staff members have participated in development of the plan. We have not attempted to address each of the findings separately, but rather to address them under the broad categories designated in the OIG's first recommendation.

The Role of Senior Leadership

The success of any organization depends on the willingness of each employee to embrace the organization's mission and values. We see the transformation to a person-centered system as one that requires many changes in organizational culture. As we move toward a system that empowers individuals to exert control over their lives, the organization needs to examine every aspect of the way it does business, identify barriers to implementing person-centered practices, and develop strategies to eliminate those barriers over which we have control. While every employee has a significant role in moving our organization, the support and initiative of senior leadership is essential if we are to achieve and maintain meaningful improvement.

Statewide Person-centered Planning Leadership Team. The Center will maintain active participation in the statewide initiative. Presently, SEVTC has representatives participating in three of the workgroups: Team 1, Evaluation and Quality Improvement; Team 3, Training; and Team 5, Development of the Person-Centered Plan format. Additionally, SEVTC plays an active role on the Implementation Team, a subgroup of the larger committee with representatives from all six of the workgroups. Measure: Attendance at Leadership Team meetings and related activities.

Organizational Assessment. In 2007, we conducted a facility wide mapping/assessment process to evaluate and serve as baseline on issues related to our person-centered practice initiative. The survey covered organizational support, workforce development, individual focus, support planning, and quality improvement. In addition, a number of senior level staff and division representatives were guided through a PATH process by consultants from VCU's Partnership for Peoples with Disabilities. SEVTC intends to repeat the facility-wide assessment/mapping process during the upcoming year as a continued measure of progress. Measure: Repeat the Organizational Assessment in FY 09.

Facility Strategic Plan. Since the success of person-centered practices effects all SEVTC departments and staff, each department head will be asked to incorporate strategies into the '08-'09 Strategic Plan which delineates how the department will demonstrate support and contribute to the Center's transformation initiative. Measure: Inclusion of departmental strategies in SEVTC FY 09-10 Strategic Plan.

The Director's 'Facility Focus' Sessions. The Director will conduct Facility Focus presentations and interactive exercises which target topics in person-centered practice. Most sessions will include an activity designed to promote discussion among workgroups and provide feedback to senior leadership. Facility Focus topics will be drawn from the literature on person-centered practices and HPOs, the consultations of Tom Pomeranz, Michael Smull, and Dennis Reid, and the 2008 OIG report. Measure: A minimum of six Facility Focus sessions during FY 09.

SEVTC Person-centered Approach Leadership Team. The recently established SEVTC Person-centered Approach Leadership Team is comprised of members of senior leadership and representatives of all departments who have demonstrated an ability to champion person-centered practices. The Leadership Team is charged with the development of a strategic plan that identifies the steps necessary to bring about the organizational culture changes we support. The Team will:

- Generate and work with Focus Groups on specific areas that will move person-centered practices forward. Initial areas will include fiscal operations and resident funds, internal communication and client activities, and employee appreciation and recognition. Focus Groups will identify barriers to implementing plans and recommend strategies to overcome the policies or practices that are impeding progress.
- Serve as a conduit to the Facility Director for recommendations from the work of the Focus Committees and Departments on changes required in the organization or being made to increase our capacity to move our initiative forward;

- Monitor and provide feedback to the Facility Director on the progress of change initiatives;
- Recognize the efforts of staff who make significant individual or team efforts toward advancing Person-centered Practices;
- Devise and monitor methods to share the many successes we are having in this initiative;
- Work with similar groups in our communities to integrate SEVTC's actions with those of other groups in our region; and,
- Compare results of organizational assessments and other monitoring tools to evaluate progress toward the objectives of this plan.

Measure: Progress toward objectives outlined in this plan.

Seeking a Balance between Risk and a Life Like Ours. SEVTC's leadership team has long been aware that excessive limits to ensure safety and security can have a negative impact on quality of life. We also acknowledge that accountability hits direct support staff members hardest when unfortunate events occur. We have made a conscious effort to manage risk while supporting staff members, but we have found it exceedingly difficult to define an appropriate balance. This task has been complicated over time by shifting degrees of risk tolerance at the State level. SEVTC will study the concept of 'the just culture' and attempt to develop policy and practice that assures safety for people who live at the Center, preserves an essential level of accountability, but also supports a learning culture. Measure: Percentage of direct support staff members who say they feel individuals should be allowed to experience risk in order to lead better lives.

Fiscal Practice Focus Group: One of the ongoing barriers to expanding our person-centered practices is access to private or Center funds for resident purchases and activities. These practices will require increased demands for identifying and supporting personal goals of individuals, as well as a fiscal system that is responsive to their choices and desires. This Focus Group is to scrutinize our fiscal practices from all angles, put on their collective 'out of the box' thinking hats and see if there are steps in the process that are currently barriers that we could eliminate or at least improve upon to afford more timely and efficient access to private or center funds for the people we support. Measure: Change in practices that allow for more timely and efficient access to Center and personal funds as indicated through feedback from staff and people who live at SEVTC.

Communication Focus Group: One of the recurring themes is how information is conveyed to employees and residents of the Center. Because a well informed workforce is critical to our achievements, the relevance of communication cannot be overstated. Sharing 'the buzz' is critical to maintaining the enthusiasm and keeping staff engaged in the effort of a person-centered approach. This focus group is charged with developing a Center wide strategy for improving and increasing communication including tools for distributing information about person-centered practices and on- and off-campus activities in which people may have interest. Measure: More frequent and accessible campus-wide information using multiple modalities is

available to everyone at SEVTC regarding activities, individual and group opportunities, and accomplishments.

Workforce Development

As indicated in our Mission and Values, employees are SEVTC's most important asset. Retention of qualified and motivated direct support staff members is of growing national concern. SEVTC has experienced this challenge and is committed to minimizing turnover and the loss of valued employees through the human resources practices that support a person-centered approach. Two important OIG findings are that employees tend to interact in a manner more typical of caregivers and rate themselves as higher in person-centered practices than observation reveals. We are reminded that training by itself does not guarantee that new concepts are implemented, particularly when coinciding standards and system changes do not occur. Accordingly, we plan to advance the following initiatives in the coming year to enhance the quality of interactions between all employees and residents.

Person-centered Approach Training: SEVTC has been engaged in a regional training project in cooperation with the VCU Partnership for People with Disabilities "Rebalancing" grant and several CSB's. Through this project, approximately 25% of the SEVTC staff have attended Michael Smull's two day Person-centered Thinking course—often in groups that mixed facility and community personnel. This training laid the groundwork for a common understanding of person-centered thinking at the Center and in the CSB's involved. The Rebalancing project ended this spring. However, SEVTC will take steps to maintain the intensive training effort. First, a small group of SEVTC and CSB employees has completed or is working toward formal certification by Michael Smull as instructors. As time and funding permit, the Center will continue joint training activities in HPR-V. Second, SEVTC will develop a training protocol that combines person-centered principles and practices of Michael Smull, Tom Pomeranz, Dennis Reid and other national figures. This training will emphasize the importance of quality interactions between individuals and support staff, personal relationships, valued roles in the facility and the community, and a shared commitment to providing the supports and services that empowers the individual toward increased control in his/her life. By the end of 2009, all employees will have participated in that training. And, third, this training will become a part of the new employee orientation program. Measure: By the end of 2009, all employees will have participated in the person-centered approach.

Person-centered Approach Coaches: SEVTC is working to establish and maintain a group of coaches who will champion the approach in application of styles of interaction and relationships, tools and forms, and planning at the Center and in the community. The primary function of these coaches will be to offer support to and incidental teaching for direct support personnel in application of person-centered practices in the lives planning of those they support. Several CSB's are developing similar coaching model. Joint meetings of coaches will be held with these CSBs, and quarterly meetings will be scheduled for SEVTC coaches. These meetings will enable coaches to share experiences and successes and support each other in the overall effort through these meetings and a developing regional network. SEVTC plans to develop coaching training for those residential supervisors, resource professionals, and others who are highly motivated to advance a person-centered approach at SEVTC. Measure: Bi-monthly meetings

held with CSB's during FY 09. SEVTC Coaches Training Curriculum developed by February, 2009.

Cottage Team Leader (QMRP) Roundtable: Recognizing that supervisors play a significant role in ensuring that interactions and relationships maximize dignity and respect between staff and residents and between staff and their co-workers, the Staff Training Department has established sessions for these key supervisors to share experiences, solve problems, and support each other in becoming more effective managers. Experience demonstrates that one important path to an effective person-centered approach and to the changes in organizational culture we seek is through effective line management. Initial topics to be discussed in the roundtable gatherings include orienting new staff, conducting a meeting, implementing changes, rewarding exceptional performance, counseling and disciplining employees, interviewing, modeling behavior and building relationships, and efficient, employee-friendly scheduling and retaining competent trained employees. Measure: Monthly TL roundtable sessions held between June and December, 2008.

Employee Recognition and Appreciation. The Person-Centered Approach Leadership Team has piloted and is establishing a focus group on employee recognition and appreciation. This group will include representatives of many Center departments and a number of direct support staff members. Several objectives have been identified: to promote an organizational culture change which demonstrates value and support for its employees through recognition; to enhance the improvement of employee satisfaction and morale; to reduce stress and absenteeism; to help attract and retain high-performing employees; and, to recognize and reward staff performance which contributes to the best practices of person-centered thinking. Measure: Number of recognition submissions monthly. Employee feedback in organizational assessment.

Individual Services Planning & Design of the Individual Resident Record

For several years SEVTC has been engaged in an effort to shift individual support planning and related elements of the Client Record to more person-centered processes and paperwork. We reviewed literature and looked at person-centered plans from elsewhere in the region, the state, and the country. We have made some changes; however, significant modifications pose special challenges. We recognized that (a) as part of a larger system, SEVTC is limited in ability to change key elements of the Client Record; (b) new processes and paperwork will be time-consuming for staff, families, and consumers and that the new must be substituted for the old; (c) changes could compromise ICF/MR surveys; (d) there may be inherent conflicts in an attempt to meld ICF/MR and person-centered processes; and, (e) consistency in processes and paperwork within HPR-V could be of benefit to individuals, families, and service providers. The Department's decision to form a statewide committee to address the range of issues on person-centered planning, including attention to records and processes, was a very positive step.

Statewide Person-centered Planning Leadership Team. SEVTC is working actively with the leadership team and Central Office staff to develop a more person-centered individual support planning process and record system that meets basic departmental, state, and federal requirements. SEVTC will participate as a field test site for new formats and procedures. SEVTC will also implement the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) in a manner consistent with

recommendations and guidelines of the leadership team. Measure: Attendance at Statewide Leadership Team meetings and participation in field test. Implementation of SIS within timelines and procedures established by the Department.

Transformation of Center Processes and Records: While statewide service planning and record systems are in the development and testing stages, SEVTC will modify processes and records for greater consistency with our overall transition to a more person-centered culture. We will work toward developing procedures that identify and document: (a) an vision for each individual's life; (b) personal and learning goals/objectives that reflect personal choices, preferences, and strengths; (c) opportunities to develop positive relationships; (d) participation of individuals and those who are important in their lives to include authorized representatives and family members, direct support personnel, and community contacts in annual planning meetings; (e) the persons role in the facility and/or community; (f) involvement in community life; (g) identification of learning goals that are of benefit in each individuals life; and, (g) the celebration of accomplishments. Measure: Continued development of planning and documentation systems to include listed information.

Resident Activities and Opportunities

Opportunities and Choice. We recognize that choice is the gateway to self-determination. We also recognize that for meaningful choices to be made, one must have meaningful opportunities. SEVTC will seek to provide opportunities, help individuals learn to make day-to-day choices, and support individuals as they make important life decisions.

- All residents will participate to the fullest extent in the annual planning process for supports and services. Consistent with the current drafts of the Statewide Person-centered Plan format, SEVTC's process is designed to identify the individual's talents, preferences, and those aspects of the individual's life that are most important to increasing the quality of his or her life. The planning process will use this profile information to develop, with the individual and those who provide natural and paid supports, those strategies to work toward those personal goals that will help the individual achieve the kind of life he or she desires.
- Communication of choices and preferences is an important skill for self-determination. We will continue to promote communication training and the use of assistive technology, where necessary, to develop the skills and opportunities for individuals to assert more control over their lives.
- Choices and preferences in meals, foods, and snack selections are fundamental. The breakfast choice program tested in one area of the Training Center. The dietary requirements of many people who live at SEVTC are quite complex; successful establishment of a routine of choices for one meal in a limited area was more difficult than anticipated. Based on experience gained, we will open this opportunity to more individuals.
- A Starbucks-like "Coffee Corner" has been piloted recently. This early-morning coffee shop provides a new opportunity for people to leave their homes independently, make beverage choices, and affords an opportunity for the development of new friends and relationships. This program will be established as a Center routine.

- **Leisure Activities and Materials.** Another routine opportunity for choice is in the selection of leisure activities and materials. A group has been formed to inventory activities and materials currently available, to seek new activities and materials, and to explore ways that individual choice can be supported and encouraged.
- **Clubs and Civic Groups.** We are working to increase opportunities for participation in on-campus and off-campus clubs and social groups. Several on-campus clubs are in early stages and we are evaluating ways to increase participation in community self-advocacy organizations, civic groups, and other clubs to afford more choices in activities, increase community participation, and provide new opportunities for friends and relationships.

Measure: Evidence of choices and opportunities as listed.

Southeastern People: A center-wide newsletter by and for individuals who live at SEVTC has been pilot tested. Articles recognize individual accomplishments, talents, and gifts. Anticipated benefits are to increase the valued role of those individuals and reinforce the person-centered principles of self-determination, community integration, the development of meaningful relationships. Measure: Involvement of residents as reporters and in other roles in the publishing process.

Relationship to the Community

It is difficult to consider community integration and supporting community relationships for individuals who live at SEVTC without considering the Training Center's role within the Region. Sweeping changes have taken place in HPR-V in a few short years. The Center is no longer an isolated point of service and is well on the way to becoming part of a seamless system. CSB personnel visit the Center frequently, it is not uncommon for meetings and training activities to be attended by employees of CSBs and the Center, the region's RCSC, based at SEVTC, has recently begun provision of dental and behavioral services on an outpatient basis, and all admissions to the Training Center are controlled by a regional committee comprised of Center staff and CSB MR Directors. The Training Center routinely participates in meetings of CSB Executive Directors, the Regional Utilization Review Committee, the Regional Strategic Oversight Committee and, on occasion, the Regional Finance Committee. SEVTC is a full partner in regional strategic planning for persons with intellectual disabilities. The developing relationship between Center and communities supports and holds promise for new development in efforts to strengthen the community integration of persons who live at SEVTC, whether for a few days or for years.

Community Placement and SEVTC Downsizing. We recognize that the best opportunities for community inclusion are possible when an individual actually lives in his or her community. SEVTC will continue to work with the individuals we support, families, and CSBs to facilitate moves to community homes. The person-centered planning process has had positive impacts in a number of the moves in the past two years. SEVTC will ensure that person-centered planning is an element of future community placements. Measure: Number of successful moves to community homes in FY 09. SEVTC census in June, 2009.

Community Employment. SEVTC has historically sought community based employment. Unfortunately, the availability of willing employers, staffing and funding issues, the demands on resources for on-campus work and other factors have limited our ability to provide sufficient numbers of employment opportunities. The recent emphasis on community integration has strengthened support for this essential service component and the numbers of individuals

working in local communities has increased marginally. SEVTC will continue efforts to open opportunities for people to choose meaningful and valued employment in local communities. While there are many ways of assisting individuals to achieve a valued role, our experience, and the general recognition within the field, is that meaningful employment is one of the surest roads to accomplishing self-esteem and sense of worth. Measure: Numbers/percentages of persons who do paid work in community settings.

Community Day Support and Volunteer Programs. SEVTC will strive to open new opportunities for unpaid day activity programs or volunteer opportunities for individuals who ‘have not found a job’. Measures: Numbers/percentages of persons who have unpaid day activity or volunteer roles in community settings.

Community Outings. Opportunities for community outings has also been emphasized in the past year and will continue to be promoted both through the efforts of our recreation specialists and the cottage teams. Baseline data has been established, and we will continue to evaluate progress over the coming months. While some of these outings are conducted with one or two individuals, the majority of the activities, as indicated in the OIG report, included larger numbers of individuals. While we are not yet ready to discourage group activities, we will promote the value of individualized shopping trips, activities that provide greater opportunity to develop relationships with individuals in their community, and participation in civic organizations or self-advocacy groups. Measure: Numbers/percentages of community outings guided by recreation specialists and cottage teams and numbers/percentages of trips by one or two residents.

Transportation. In order to minimize instances when vehicle availability impedes the opportunity for community activities, SEVTC will continue work to expand it’s vehicle pool. The availability of ‘normal’ cars and mini-vans appropriate for individual and small group travel will be considered in planning.

Summary

In recent years, we have come to understand that the well-intended service systems that evolved in the past 30 years can do as much harm as good. Many have questioned these systems and concluded that we can do much better. To achieve this transformation we must be guided by those we intend to support. We have begun to listen in ways we have not listened before. We recognize that a facility can never be a “home” and also that we cannot completely dismantle our service system. But while there are many organizational barriers there are also many opportunities to help each individual create a good life. In order to accomplish our goals, we must move from a culture of doing-for to a culture of doing-with. We must encourage and promote self-determination. We must become teachers, seeking to support, rather than care givers. We must re-focus our efforts on the development of supportive relationships, increasing personal choices and self-determination, the provision of opportunities, and community integration. These objectives highlight that it is in the day-to-day interactions with people that we come to understand our worth, value, and the human experience. The Center is committed to this refreshing transformation. In this spirit, SEVTC has developed and begun implementation of this *Comprehensive Plan for Person-Centered Practices*.